



Chief of Police

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James T. McIntyre

TO: Chairman Robert Saltzman
Board of Appeals

FROM: Chief James McIntyre

DATE: July 17, 2014

SUBJECT: The Commons at Weiss Farm

The Stoneham Police Department has had an opportunity to review The Commons at Weiss Farm Application for a Comprehensive Permit that was submitted to the Town of Stoneham's Zoning Board of Appeals. On behalf of the Police Department, I offer the following comments:

The developer has submitted a traffic impact and access survey which details their review of existing traffic volume, the operational conditions within the traffic stream and its perception by motorists, vehicle crashes, proposed roadway modifications at the driveway to 170 Franklin Street, and recommendations for traffic signal adjustments. Major intersections along Franklin Street, as well as Summer and Pond Streets, and Main and Summer Streets were rated using a concept of Level of Service (LOS). This LOS review examined current road conditions, projected conditions upon the completion of The Commons development, as well as traffic projections to 2018.

In the survey, the methodology of the Levels of Service is explained. From the report, *"the concept of level of service (LOS) is defined as a qualitative measure describing operational conditions within a traffic stream and their perception by motorists and/or passengers. A level-of-service definition provides an index to quality of traffic flow in terms of such factors as speed, travel time, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, comfort, convenience, and safety."*

"Six levels of service are defined for each facility. They are given letter designations from A to F, with LOS A representing the best operational conditions and LOS F as the worst. Since the level of service of a traffic facility is a function of the traffic flows placed upon it, such a facility may operate at a wide range of levels of service, depending

upon the time of day, day of week, or period of year. A description of the operating condition under each level of service is provided below:"

The details of a LOS A through LOS F designation are explained. A "LOS F" designation indicates that an area is considered to be unacceptable to most drivers with high delay values that often occur, when arrival flow rates exceed the capacity of the intersection.

On page 33 of the traffic impact and access study, the Franklin Street at Site Driveway location is discussed. The report notes that *"under future traffic-volume conditions the Franklin Street movements at the site location are expected to operate at optimal levels (LOS A). This is true during times when traffic flow along Franklin Street is unrestrained, not necessarily when the traffic directors are present at Stevens Street and at the High School. As described in the Traffic Observations section of this study, during this peak period prior to the start of school the westbound traffic along Franklin Street queues past the site driveway. The site driveway southbound left-turn movement is expected to operate at LOS F with a 50.1 seconds of delay during the weekday AM peak hour and LOS F with more than 100.0 seconds of delay during the weekday PM peak hour while the right-turn movement is expected to operate at LOS C. Even though fewer vehicles are exiting the site during the weekday PM peak hour, the delay for the vehicles exiting is longer due to the increased traffic making a left-turn into the site as well as the increased traffic on the eastbound through movement."*

This report clearly indicates that vehicles attempting to exit from the site onto Franklin Street during the weekday AM and PM peak hours will experience significant delays – at times approaching two minutes. During peak traffic times, this intersection is designated at a LOS F – the worst designation. I am concerned that the operators attempting to exit the site during these times will begin to experience frustration and take risks in order to merge into traffic, thus increasing the potential for a vehicle crash.

The Police Department does not have a traffic engineer on staff which has the knowledge to perform a technical review of the data and recommendations in the study. I would suggest a peer review of this study to examine its accuracy and applicability. Particular areas to review would include:

- Any potential negative impact on traffic flow resulting from the creation of a left turn lane on Franklin Street (westbound) at the driveway to the site and the accompanying resizing/adjusting of travel lanes without an increase in the width of the roadway;
- Whether the developer's traffic consultants recommended timing adjustments of traffic signals are appropriate and if the existing traffic control boxes are capable of these modification; and
- The appropriateness of a comprehensive review of all motor vehicle crashes occurring at an intersection, rather than a review only of crashes reported to Mass DOT. Collision data was obtained from the Stoneham Police Department for the years 2011-2013 and from MassDOT for the years 2009-2011. It was noted in the report that collisions in which the damage was under \$1,000 were not

incorporated into the crash rate calculations. If all crashes were calculated, how would this impact the reported safety rating of the intersections.

Lastly, the addition of several hundred new residents from the proposed 264 dwelling units will only exacerbate the concerns over our police department's staffing levels. The police department is staffed with 36 full-time officers, which was reduced from 38 officers in 2005. The Federal Bureau of Investigation's 2012 Uniform Crime Report provides information on the average number of officers per 1000 residents in communities with a population of between 10,000 to 24,999. The average ratio in New England is 2.2 officers per 1000 residents. Based upon the 2010 census of 21,437 and comparing our department to peer communities, Stoneham should have a compliment of 47 police officers.

Thank you for allowing the police department the opportunity to offer comments on this permit application.